BOOK REVIEWS

Immigrants to the Pure Land: The Modernization, Acculturation, and Globalization of Shin Buddhism, 1898–1941. By Michihiro Ama. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. xiv + 311 pages. Cloth $47.00.

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The story of Japanese Buddhism's arrival and evolution in the United States has been told many times. It is a narrative whose themes of encounter, discrimination, adaptation, and survival helped establish many of the basic tropes for the overall study of Buddhism's migration to the West. Given how familiar this story is, it may seem as if little more can be said on the subject, or at least that little more attention is necessary. This is especially true since many researchers interested in American Buddhism are more focused on the present than the past, and draw primarily on sociological and anthropological methods rather than on the discipline of history. But Michihiro Ama's *Immigrants to the Pure Land* provides a welcome fresh look at the initial stages of Buddhist transmission to Hawaii and North America. In doing so he demonstrates that supposedly well-known stories can be refreshed through new approaches, and that there is indeed much that has been left unexamined in the early American Buddhist past.

Immigrants to the Pure Land distinguishes itself in three particular ways from much of the earlier scholarship on the subject. First, it is very contemporary in its attention to such hot topics as transnationalism, ritual, material culture, and conflict within religious and cultural minority groups (rather than focusing only on conflict with dominant groups). This makes the work feel relevant to current scholars and disciplinary concerns across a variety of fields. Second, Ama draws on sources that have been under-utilized in previous studies, most especially documents housed in the archives of the Buddhist Churches of America, maintained by the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. The result is that even figures touched upon by earlier researchers are cast at times in a new light, and many new characters are restored to their proper place in the narrative. Third, the book

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investigates many topics that have previously received inadequate attention, such as the role of Euro-Americans in pre-war American Jōdo Shinshū and the presence of Higashi Honganji-affiliated Jōdo Shinshū temples in Hawaii and North America. Together, these differences mean that Ama is able to present a rich, detailed exploration of his subject. A further benefit of his work is that he helps to put a nail in the coffin of older narratives that depicted Asian-American Buddhism as simplistically conservative, as pre- or anti-modern, and that understood adaptation in a linear, almost teleological sense of progression from Japanese to American. The characters in Ama's story are all clearly modern and most are modernists, concerned to make their Buddhism relevant to a globalizing world filled with challenges and possibilities. He is particularly keen to demonstrate that processes of both Americanization and Japanification were important in the acculturation of American Jōdo Shinshū.

Chapter 1 covers the modern development of Shin Buddhism. Scholars of Japanese religion will find this material familiar, but for those whose expertise primarily lies in North American subjects the chapter will prove a useful (and short) overview. Very briefly rehearsing the history of Shinran, Ama proceeds to a discussion of Rennyo's theory of two truths ("the law of the ruler" and "the law of the Buddha") which will be important at many points in his later discussions. Most of the chapter is spent explaining developments within the dual Honganji traditions during the Meiji and Taishō eras. Ama's own contributions begin in chapter 2, as he discusses the first efforts to bring Jōdo Shinshū to Hawaii and North America. An interesting difference developed as Hawaiian ministers promoted Nishi Honganji sectarianism in the face of competing Japanese Buddhist sects, while mainland ministers gave relatively greater attention to trans-sectarian Buddhist approaches focused on Śākyamuni Buddha. Ama describes many challenges faced by early ministers. Kagahi Sōryū got caught between the Honganji and local rules: he equated Amida Buddha with the Christian God in order to gain access to the Hawaiian plantations, but this "skillful means" was unacceptable to the head temple. The governor of Hawaii refused to grant a charter to the Honpa Honganji Mission of Hawaii because he felt that it would indoctrinate Japanese immigrants to be loyal to Japan. Imposter priests collected donations in the name of Honganji, depleting local funds and giving a bad name to real ministers. Japanese-American Christians reviled the Buddhists as holding back the process of Americanization. Intra- and inter-temple disputes broke out in many places over money, power, parish territories, and personality conflicts.

Through all these problems, however, the Nishi Honganji temples continued to expand both on the islands and the mainland, and ministers and bishops adapted to each new situation. In chapter 3 Ama examines the development of ministries, touching on many important topics. He describes the lives of Issei ministers and the first Nisei ministers, and gives some of the first detailed descriptions of the earliest Euro-American ministers. The English propagation programs in both Hawaii and North America included significant leadership by these Euro-American ministers, whose commitment to Jōdo Shinshū varied: some showed interest in Shinran's teachings, while many were primarily interested in Theravada or trans-sectarian approaches. One issue that is lightly mentioned but deserves more attention is the role and experience of female ministers, both Japanese-American and Euro-American.

Chapter 4 moves away from administrative matters to examine rituals and architecture. Ama demonstrates the complexity of American Shin Buddhist ritualism even at this early time period, when various ministers and temples promoted their own service formats, influences flowed not only from Japan to the West but also back again, and Theravada-derived elements made a notable impact on the form and style of American Shin services. Standardization of services did not really arrive until the 1930s. Some of the topics, such as gathas and temple architectural styles, have been covered elsewhere by scholars such as George Tanabe, Scott Mitchell, and Richard Jaffe, and Ama does not add much new on these subjects. But the fascinating example Ama provides of a precepts ceremony for Euro-Americans is much fresher, and could have been analyzed in greater detail.

Perhaps the best section of the book is chapter 5, where Ama describes the reconstruction of Shin Buddhist doctrine by three modernist ministers: Takahashi Takeichi, Kyōgoku Itsuzō, and Imamura Emyō. These three demonstrate the diversity of responses that ministers from the same tradition made to the challenges of Christianity, other Buddhist denominations, and encounter with American culture (especially democratic principles). Takahashi was steeped in the thinking of the American philosopher John Dewey, and applied his instrumentalist principles to the interpretation of Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*. He took a metaphoric approach to Shinran's ideas and stressed how the apparent duality of Amida and ordinary people is resolved in the oneness of true reality. His method was often comparative, stressing the similarities and differences between the religious understandings of Shinran and the Christian evangelist Paul (the most important of these is that faith is a means to salvation in Paul, whereas it is an end unto itself in Shinran, according to Takahashi).

Kyōgoku took a more practical approach than Takahashi and focused on the pastoral needs of Japanese-American laypeople, especially the education and support of the Nisei. His main intellectual influence was the well-known Japanese Shin modernist Kiyozawa Manshi (to a lesser extent, Kyōgoku was also influenced by Kiyozawa's disciple Akegarasu Haya and Nishida Kitarō). Kyōgoku sought to teach Buddhist morality centered on the six *pāramitā*s, providing a basic foundation for Buddhist living to his parishioners and readers. But this was also the basis for going beyond to a more specifically Jōdo Shinshū religious awakening. He advocated a method of rigorous (even ruthless) introspection that stripped the false self bare and revealed oneself in one's true aspects: realization of one's absolute failure to uphold the *pāramitā*s leads to the realization of Amida's compassion. Ama sees in Kyōgoku's reliance on Kiyozawa a sort of Japanification of American Shin, compared to the American influence of Dewey on Takahashi.

As Ama tells it, Imamura is distinguished by his application of Buddhism to problems in society faced by the Issei and Nisei, whereas Kyōgoku's approach is very interior in its orientation. Imamura was influenced by the social, educational, and religious reformer Fukuzawa Yukichi, on the one hand, and his encounter with American ideals of liberal democracy, on the other. He introduced extensive discussion of American values and political thought into Hawaiian Jōdo Shinshū, and applied Buddhist ethics to such situations as the plantation strikes. Though Ama does not make this claim, it is possible to see in Imamura's actions of the 1910s and 1920s the first emergence in America of what came to be called "engaged Buddhism."

Chapter 6 provides a short but welcome history of the Higashi Honganji tradition in Hawaii and North America. This sister denomination of the better known (in the West) Nishi Honganji has largely been eclipsed in studies of American Buddhism. Ama's chapter clearly demonstrates the relevancy of studying Higashi Honganji in America, both because it has its own interesting history and because its presence had important impacts on the dominant Nishi Honganji tradition. He deftly illustrates how Higashi made little attempt at direct proselytizing on the mainland, yet advanced nonetheless through cannily taking advantage of schisms within the Nishi temples. Ama also discusses the intellectual and spiritual influence of some Higashi-affiliated ministers. His brief exploration of pre-war American Higashi Honganji also suggests the need for dedicated studies on the tradition since World War II; he points to the importance of such figures as Gyōmei Kubose, but since they fall outside his period of study, he does not spend much space on them.

The final chapter in *Immigrants to the Pure Land* looks at the sociopolitical implications of Shin Buddhist acculturation. Far from alienated minorities hiding in cultural enclaves, some Issei Shin ministers on the mainland became involved in international issues of war and peace, going so far as to meet with American president Woodrow Wilson to lobby for an end to World War I. Meanwhile Hawaiian ministers became caught up in the local fights for better wages for plantation workers and disputes over Japanese language schools. The most important lesson to take away from *Immigrants to the Pure Land* is that acculturation is a complex process with many different factors. It is not simply the transplantation of one culture or religion to a new area, nor are immigrants and their descendants affected only by the encounter with the new national host culture. As Ama argues persuasively, acculturation involves local, regional, national, and global levels and influences all at the same time.

If there is a weakness to *Immigrants to the Pure Land*, it is that in trying to discuss so many different things, Ama inevitably leaves many topics less deeply explored than they might have been. It is wonderful to have a scholar direct attention to the Higashi Honganji tradition in the West, for instance, but the level of analysis could have been greater. Often interesting topics ("A Critical Ethos of Shin Buddhism," for example) are raised but receive only a few pages of attention; others, such as the role of gender in the first forty-three years of American Shin Buddhism, receive essentially no attention. The result is that the reader is sometimes left unsatisfied, wishing for additional description and analysis. The book also ends oddly on a note about how Shin Buddhism can develop vitally in the twenty-first century. For nearly the entire book Ama provides the reader with a knowledgeable, objective treatment of an interesting topic; then, literally on the very last page, he suddenly fast-forwards seventy years and takes a normative turn that jars with the rest of his approach.

But these are nitpicks of what is certainly a quite solid book. *Immigrants to the Pure Land* does valuable service to researchers of Western Buddhism, religion and globalization, and Japanese-American ethnic studies. It deserves a place on graduate course syllabi; undergraduate students should be able to handle this material as well, and many of the chapters stand alone well enough that they could be assigned without the necessity of reading the entire book.